THE

ORDEAL.

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POLITICKS.

It is not the disorder, but the physician; it is not a casual concurrence of calamitous circumstances; it is the pernicious hand of government, which alone can make a whole people desperate. JUNIUS.

REVIEW *of Mr. Giles's first Speech in the Senate of the United States, on the Resolution of Mr. Hillhouse to repeal the Embargo Laws.*

THE numerous questions which the Embargo laws have occasioned, have excited general attention by stronger appeals to *interest* in the discussion, than can probably be found in the elements of any other controversy, except that of the adoption of the constitution, that has ever been agitated in the United States. It may now, perhaps, be too late to enter at large into the merits of the principal topicks involved in the consideration of that measure: but the importance which has been attached by the democratick party to the SPEECH of MR. GILES, *under review*, seems to demand an exposition of its visionary and impracticable fancies, and a refutation of the assumed arguments by which the advocates of the embargo justify a continuance of the policy, upon which it was originally founded.

As the views of this most ingenious gentlemen, are chiefly relied upon by his party, and as his ambition we understand is to be considered the champion of that party, we are willing to enter into his reasonings somewhat at large; and shall first offer a faithful abstract of his arguments in defence of the administration, which is contained in this attempt, and afterwards produce such remarks as have occurred to us upon the momentous question, which it is its intention to discuss.

He begins with a great deal of declamation about his retirement from the political world, and his astonishment that the embargo laws should have met with any opposition, since, from the opportunities he had had of observing *thereupon*, he thought he *knew something of the general objects of those laws;* though he at the same time confessed he felt a *real want of information* on the subject. From this avowal at the outset we were not at all surprised to discover numerous other contradictions in the inferences which he draws, from more important points than the consequence which results from either *his knowledge of the embargo laws*, or his *want of information* on the subject.

Mr. Giles in the first place understands the intention of the embargo laws to be two fold; a precautionary, operating upon ourselves, and a coercive intention, operating upon the aggressing belligerents. And as the only fair estimate of the measure to be obtained must be by considering our situation at the time of its adoption, he proceeds to inform us that the government had a *tolerably* correct account of it. He says we had merchandise and vessels actually afloat to the value of 100 millions of dollars; that merchandise and vessels to the amount of 50 millions more were expected shortly to be set afloat; and that 50,000 seamen would be required to navigate the property. In this state of things France had issued her hostile edicts, and government were informed of an intention on the part of Great-Britain to issue her Orders in Council, "the character and object of which were known." Here Mr. Giles pauses in his argument to offer a panegyrick on Mr. Jefferson for saving all this property and all these seamen, and then proceeds to admit that they had gone *voluntarily* into that very "*hard and ignominious service*," to prevent which has been the principal occasion of the difficulties under which we labour. First, he says the *fact* of their enlistment in foreign service is greatly exaggerated, then he endeavours to excuse the President for driving them out of the country, and afterward affirms that they have *not* gone away. Thus it is that the warm and sincere advocate of Mr. Jefferson runs away with discretion, and debases his talents by contradiction.

After taking for granted, however, that the precautionary part of the embargo policy, has been attained, one principal object of which he admits was the security of our seamen, he proceeds to prove its *coercion on foreign nations*. But he is stopped at the threshold by the consideration of its injuring ourselves more than our enemy, and he might have added *of our friends as well as our enemies*. He remarks however, very jocosely, that the ships of the merchant are only twelve months older now than they were twelve months ago, which reminds us of Touchstone's account of the progress of time.

"'Tis but an hour ago since it was nine,
And after one hour more 'twill be eleven;
And thus from hour to hour we ripe and ripe,
And then from hour to hour we rot and rot.
And thereby hangs a tale————

The concluding part of the quotation, "rot and rot," has so strong an application to our ships, that we cannot help thinking the exclamation of Hamlet, "*that's worm-wood!*" may have a literal as well as metaphorical signification in the apprehension of Mr. Giles. The merchant, however, he says, must comfort himself with the satisfaction that he has any ships left to rot, for had it not been for the embargo he would have lost them all, and the enemy would then have derived the benefit of their capture. He wishes the merchant to 'suck

comfort from melancholy :' But the farmer, he remarks, so far from being in a deplorable, is in an enviable situation. Hear this, ye farmers of New-England,

" You have mistook your interest all this while,
By heavens! he finds, although you cannot,
Yourselves to be in marvellous in good case."

He says (the merchant having of late paid double taxes) the farmer sees fourteen millions of dollars in the treasury, of course there are no taxes; but he admits the great depreciation not to say destruction of his produce. Yet he has enough to eat and drink, let him be thankful for that; let him remember, that though his surplus produce is not worth any thing now, it would have been just as bad if the embargo had not been put on, *for the merchant would have lost all his vessels by capture, and would of course have been unable to pay for it.* In addition to this, the farmer has hitherto raised too large crops, he has injured his land in order to get rich too fast. The embargo will teach him his interest in this respect. The farmer, therefore, should make a just estimate of his " enviable situation," and pray to God in future to give him small crops, and thank the good government of his country for teaching him to discover the *smiles* of prosperity through the *tears* of his purse.

Mr. Giles then launches forth into the wide sea of panegyrick, fills the sail of domestick manufacture, and wafts her into the haven of success. No storms can threaten it when sheltered by the high lands of the embargo system; but from the operation of a mild and serene atmosphere, it will widen its roots and scatter its seeds so far, that the remotest corners of this happy, happy nation shall repose gratefully under its shade, and its final eradication can then never take place, unless occasioned by some concussion of the elements, fatal to the existence of the empire. He now comes to consider what he sat out upon, the effects of the embargo laws in *coercing* foreign powers. And first, he admits that they have not had their complete effect. This leads him into a double consideration : *of their operation on the aggressing belligerents*, and the *causes by which complete success has been frustrated.* Notwithstanding the embargo, he admits that the orders in council and imperial decrees continue; but for all this it has raised the price of flour in the West-Indies, and operating with the expectation of a small crop in England, has raised it there also; and the prices of cotton, tobacco, and naval stores are considerably enhanced, according to Liverpool price currents. But the greatest *coercion* of all is, that we have *lessened the inducements* of belligerents *to go to war with us.* A *coercion* of this kind is a novel principle, we believe, in the code of national resentments, and as it is altogether so dignified, magnanimous, and energetick, we give Mr. Jefferson full credit for having originated the idea, and Mr. Giles equal praise for enforcing it so ably.

The next effect of the embargo upon Great-Britain, he proceeds to state, is its deducting from her revenue annually 600,000 dollars; that being the amount of the duty of 4 per cent. on the manufactures sent to the United States. He next considers the consequences of drawing out of employ 50,000 manufacturers; which he affirms can be nothing less than a heavy charge upon that nation: which, oppressed as they are already with taxes, must be viewed as a dreadful calamity. Mr. Giles then remarks, with singular ingenuity and quaintness, that "all these considerations must present strong inducements to Great-Britain to revoke her hostile orders; *but she has hitherto refused so to do.*" This leads him into an examination of the causes of this refusal; which he principally attributes to our internal discontents, exaggerated through the medium of opposition papers; but he considers it may in some measure be caused by the revolution in Spain. However, this latter idea loses its force, when he considers Mr. Canning's conduct after he had heard of our own dissentions.

He then views the consequences of the embargo as respects France, and though he considers that she is not *coerced* by it nearly so much as Great-Britain, yet he undertakes to say she is affected a great deal. He speaks of the blockade of the West-India islands and their want of provisions in consequence of it; touches lightly upon its effects upon Spain and Holland, at the time of its adoption in alliance with France, and throws out a sly insinuation that it might have had some operation in the evacuation of Portugal by the French army. Which latter circumstance, we think, produces an *argument in favour of coercing Great-Britain* of wonderful efficacy and ingenuity.

He defends the French Emperor from the suggestion which he is said to have made in favour of this measure, by saying that he viewed it as all politicians throughout Europe considered it, that is, with singular complacency. Which idea of Napoleon, he does not seem to imagine, places any obstacle to the fact of its injuring him all the time he is praising it.

He concludes this branch of the discussion by the following result: "That the embargo laws have not been without materially beneficial effects upon both the belligerents; that they have presented strong appeals to the interests of both; but that these appeals have not produced their complete effect." And this effect, he further observes, has only failed from extraordinary events, which could not possibly have been foreseen at the adoption of the measure.

The close of his speech is made up of replies to Messrs. Hillhouse, Lloyd, and others; but with them, we at present have nothing to do. What we have abstracted is the sum and substance of Mr. Giles' defence of the embargo policy. It appears plainly from the whole of his vindication, that Mr. Giles rests his defence of the measure, upon the two broad grounds assumed by the administration; viz.

1st. That it operated as a precaution, in saving our merchandize, ships and seamen from the gripe of aggressing belligerents; and

2d. That, presenting most powerful appeals to the interests of our enemies, it was a measure of coercion, calculated to produce great national concessions in our favour.

We shall not here attempt to close the argument of Mr. Giles by blocking it with a question of constitutional right; nor notice in particular the insolence of his reasonings on *a question of continuance*, which properly applied to *the question of adoption;* considering that at the time of adoption it was hurried through without either reason or decorum. We are willing to contemplate the subject on the grounds he has assumed, and our inquiries, we fear, will not lead us to any very satisfactory conclusion.

We are willing to admit that indications were evident, at the time this measure was passed, on the part of Great-Britain that she was about to retaliate on France for the Berlin decree of Nov. 21; but government, not having any official account of them, the British orders in council did in fact make no part of the reasons for determining in favour of the embargo. We are willing also to admit the measure to have been wise, so far as it conduced to calling in our ships, and giving us time to prepare a more efficient system of defence; but no further. The time at which its benefits accrued has long ago expired; and when Mr. Giles offers as a present *argument for the continuance of the policy*, what was only good twelve months ago, we oppose him at the very outset of the discussion. If the embargo did then operate as a precaution; at present it has a *contrary* effect, and the longer it *continues, that effect is likely to be increased.* The objects of precaution were merchandize, vessels and seamen. Mr. Giles admits the seamen to have departed from the country, but in limited numbers; and we know they left it in consequence of the continuance of the embargo. The operation of precaution, in respect to them, is now directly *reversed;* and as the length of its duration is admitted to increase the temptation to depart into other countries, the embargo *now* has evidently an opposite effect to that calculated upon at the period when it was laid. The *importance* of our seamen need not here be amplified to convince the present administration; since it has been their constant endeavour to make *them the principal subject* of difficulty in all our negociations with Great-Britain. And we venture to affirm, without much risk of contradiction, that *but fo them* and the ridiculous discussions of Mr. Madison about British deserters, our commerce would now have been unshackled by restrictions. Our merchandize and ships are the only objects of precaution then, to which the embargo can now have any application. And here Mr. Giles is obliged to confess that many of our merchants have been ruined in consequence of the fate of our ships and the extravagant duties they have been obliged to pay upon an enormous amount of inactive merchandize. Our domestick produce is

partly perished. Commerce abroad is now forcing new channels of conveyance; and were the embargo raised to-morrow, our *precaution* would have ruined the merchant by *unequal and unjust pressure;* and he would never again be placed upon the advantageous ground on which he stood before the embargo was established, in consequence of the substitution of other carriers.

The argument of precaution now is surely at an end, as applied to seamen, ships and merchandize. If merchants are willing to risk their property abroad under all the present restrictions of France and England; if there is a general spirit of disaffection in the commercial states, and if there are constant evasions of the laws, it is vain to persist in the measure on that ground. Experience is daily attesting the fallacy of the principle.

The idea of presenting such appeals to the interests of the belligerent powers, as to induce them to alter their decrees and orders, which makes the second branch of Mr. Giles' defence, is perfectly absurd, on two grounds. First, because the measure was impotent as it respects our foreign relations, and because there are *some inducements for believing the British government are favourable to its continuance;* and second, because had it been evidently effective, the British nation would sustain a very pressing emergence before she would grant the high-handed principles of commerce for which our administration are contending.

It may be also mentioned that the unaccommodating temper which the President and Mr. Madison have indicated towards Great-Britain, and their acquiescing deportment towards France, were too evident to the British ministry to induce a relaxation of a system, which, whatever might be its effects on that nation, certainly was more materially injurious to the citizens of the United States.

(To be continued.)

POETRY.

Few complaints have been more frequently preferred and in every instance have been so well maintained, as that, which charges the present theatrical taste, with nonsensical and affected sentiment, hard-strained wit and frivolous repartee. The scene painter, and not the poet, seems to be the object of the greatest attention; and wild beasts, demons and angels the chief personages, to exhibit whom, the pageantry of the stage is contrived. To effect this desirable end, real dogs have been taught to plunge into real water before the audience; wild-men, wood-demons, spectres, caravans, sorcerers, giants, oracles, green, black, red and blue fiends, are put in requisition from known and unknown worlds; the scene painter and tailor are taught to manufacture

them in legions, and they are then produced to frighten the young, and delight the full-grown children, who compose the audience. "How natural," exclaims a lady, "is that hell represented; and then "that fiery fiend! the painter must surely have been familiar with such sights, or he never could have drawn them so truly."

We really are unacquainted with any subject which requires more decisive exposure, than this tendency to applaud the marvellous and corrupt taste, by which modern authors are directed. The following parody of "*Collins's Ode on the Passions*," has the exposure of this perverted taste in view. The style is not very successfully laboured, nor is the parody remarkably close; yet the thoughts are some of them eminently happy, and others singularly humorous; but it is mainly to be commended for its beneficial tendency. We offer no other apology for introducing it than this, that the same taste which it is intended to expose has already spread very widely in America, and threatens to eradicate every principle of legitimate comedy which has ever been implanted in the country.

COMEDY IN THE CAGE.

AN ODE.

"Ordine nullo
Oscula dispensat natos suprema per omnes."

OVID.

WHEN Comedy, poor dame was old,
A vagrant strumpet and a scold,
The beadle forc'd her to remain
In a tall cage near Drury-lane:
Her children all, with different faces,
Sprang from promiscuous embraces,
With bawling, ballad-singing yell,
Crowded around her vaulted cell:
Till once, 'tis said, in riot frisky,
High prim'd with true Hibernian whiskey,
The motley Savoyarding band
In the piazza took their stand:
And as they oft had tried apart
The mumming masquerading art
Each, to please the gaping crowd,
Rehears'd his separate part alou

First *Snip snap* aim'd her skill to try,
(A spurious branch of repartee)
And giggling laugh'd she knew not why,
E'en at her own affected glee.

Next enter'd puzzle-headed *Plot*,
His limbs a fowler's net surrounded;

Striving to tear each stubborn knot,
He left " confusion worse confounded !"

Then *Bathos* pour'd from brazen throat,
Ideas poor, in language rich ;
Still striving to o'erleap the moat,
But falling headlong in the ditch.

But thou, *Stage Loyalty*, all boast and brag,
What was thy sublime oration ?
Where'er the scene, or false or true,
Whether in China or Peru,
Still, still it prais'd the English nation,
And to Britannia bade the world submit ;
Still would the patriot strain prolong,
And from the gallery, box and pit
Call bowing Encore, to repeat the song ;
And whilst in his own praise he spoke
Encore stood by and bawl'd out " hearts of Oak ;"
Whilst Loyalty huzza'd and wav'd the British flag :

And longer had he wav'd—but cleft in two
Arch-rainbow *Scenery* arose,
His trembling lips the magick whistle blew,
And straight appear'd the craggy rocks,
High mountains, drawing-rooms and flocks,
Prisons to guard a truant daughter,
And cataracts of real water ;
And dapper trees in new green clothes,
All nodding " How d'ye do," in rows ;
And though sometimes, each loud applause between,
Rejected *Costume* at his side,
" All this is mighty pretty," cried ;
" But tell me, gaudy painter, what
" It has to do with me or *Plot* ?"
Still Scenery lengthen'd out his tether,
And Europe, Asia, Afric, danc'd a jig together.

Thy gambols, *Farce*, now high, now low,
Were nought but war-whoop, stride and grin ;
'Twas now philanthropy in Merchants' Row,
And now a booted harlequin.

With eyes upturn'd and hose unmended,
Pale *Sentiment* a tub ascended,
And from her methodistick throne,
In piteous lamentable tone,

Pour'd in Soliloquy the doleful note,
While caught from box to box around,
Dulness bore the soothing sound,
Soft o'er the pit the drowsy murmur's float
And round the gall'ries flit in fond delay;
Till tir'd with clapping and encoring,
All gently nodding, dozing, snoring,
In sleep the audience died away.

But O how alter'd was the wondering stare,
When mad *Buffoonery*, leaping forth to view,
A fool's-cap jingling on his crown,
One stocking red, the other blue,
Cried "dam'me, that's your sort," and knock'd old Squaretoes down;
Then strew'd the earth with broken crockery ware.
The heroes of the upper gallery go
In gathering crowds to see the show,
Creeping from forth their alleys low;
Exulting Folly join'd the yell,
And Bedlam shook his chains through every cell.

Last came *Pun*, as Janus sturdy,
He in zig-zag motion prancing;
To the jews-harp his teeth address'd;
But soon he spied the hurdy-gurdy,
Whose buzz ambiguous pleas'd his ear the best.
They would have thought who heard him gabble
His Babel jargon to the rabble,
They saw in village pool a goose,
Her red beak split, her pinions loose,
To her own hisses madly dancing.
Whilst as conundrums round he flung,
Pun join'd with Folly in an Irish reel;
Naked her body was, and light her heel,
And he, sworn foe to melancholy,
Scorning to be outdone by Folly,
Shook nameless nothings from his quiv'ring tongue.

O Comedy, thou fallen fair!
Friend to pleasure, foe to care,
Now common grown to half the town—
Where is thy former fair renown?
Whene'er stage history records
The memory of thy wedded lords,

Dost thou no fond remembrance feel
For Congreve, Coleman, Cibber, Steele?
Hadst thou reserv'd for such a race
Thy matrimonial, chaste embrace,
Thy womb had ne'er produc'd to view
This spurious raggamuffin crew.
Tis said, and I believe the tale,
Thy lash of old could more avail,
Wrought more amendment from the stage,
Than all that charms this senseless age.
For shame! give o'er this vagrant life,
Become once more a wedded wife;
Or turn to fasting, prayers, and Lent,
And in thy widowhood repent.

INTRODUCTORY.

It is the avowed intention of the Editors of the Ordeal to expose all systems which they think repugnant to true religion; the interests of which it is their determination to maintain. To effect which great national object they are ready *to fight it to the last.* Satire is now-a-days, and to certain people, no longer a mirrour from which they may see the reflexion of their own faces; but a pane of window-glass, in which they can discover any other image than their own. It may be necessary to observe, that the communication which follows has a local application; let those who are concerned have wit enough to find it out. Our correspondent too, is one who is no flincher, 'he'll not budge an inch from the encounter.'

If any person offended with his remarks is inclined to oppose them, the pages of the Ordeal, are open to his communications, whether they are keen or blunt, whether the arguments knock down like a sledge-hammer, or cut like a razor:

'——— Lay on *Macduff*,
And sham'd be he that first cries hold, enough.

Messrs. Editors,

I have lately met with the following Proclamation, and as I wish to communicate some information on the subject to which it refers, I have subjoined a few observations, which I hope will meet the attention, which I think they deserve.

Counter Proclamation.

"Rational Religion, having been reposing at ease for many years on the bosom of her children, now informs her offspring, that she

has been of late continually beset with her old enemies *Superstition* and *Intolerance*; that they have not only begun to undermine the foundation of her house, but are erecting a "*Battery*" for "christian warfare," the weapons of which are to be directed against her peace and happiness. This *battery* is already far advanced and *Superstition* and *Intolerance*, have not only gathered together all their children as soldiers for the garrison; but have issued proclamations tempting the children of Rational Religion to mutiny and desertion. She therefore feels herself necessitated to build up a fortification to protect her house, the guns of which are to be levelled by her eldest child *Reason*; she therefore notifies all her kindred to repair to her standard of *liberal opinions*, without delay, and she entertains no doubt of effectually neutralizing the efforts of her enemies, and checking their rapid progress in alienating the affections of her friends.

(Signed) "RATIONAL RELIGION."

This Counter Proclamation by *Rational Religion*, was promulgated a few weeks ago, and all her combatants are consulting upon measures of defence. The arrangements of the enemy are indeed formidable; they have already drilled into their service the host of *Canters*, which formerly were wild and ungovernable, by adopting their manners and behaviour; so that the *regular soldier* of the Calvinistick corps is hardly to be distinguished either by his *exercise* or *tacticks* from the numerous hordes who have heretofore wandered about under the bewildered command of *Inward Light*. The various troops of heavy artillery commanded by *Zeal of the Spirit*, perform their evolutions, of *groanings*, *violent eye-straining*, *sudden exclamation*, and *extravagant contortion*, with uncommon rapidity and efficacy. The Hopkinsian phalanx, the determination, power, and hostility of which are almost irresistible, is linked closer and closer, their weapons are more firmly fixed in the rest, and more evidently projected. Though they go *blindfolded* into the combat, they act with great unanimity; sensible that the issue, whether victory or defeat, is *fore-ordained* by their general, they are *happy to die for the glory of his service*. They are confident that a few only of the soldiers can live after the battle, and are therefore ready to oppose their front to every danger.

The light cavalry, under the conduct of *Inspiration* and *Special Grace*, who by the way are mounted on jack-asses, which indicates the *obstinacy* of their courage, have come into the field in excellent discipline and spirits. They have lately adopted the *old fashioned* armour of *Hypocrisy*, although they pretend their system is conformable to that of the *reformed* troops established many years ago. When they enter into an engagement, as they are decided enemies to *instrumental musick*, they set up a *braying and snuffling* in conjunction with the *asses* on which they are mounted; they then divide *into concerns*, *calls*,

and experiences, which are evolutions preparatory to what they esteem complete victory, or *hopeful conversion ;* then they rush into combat, *shutting their eyes* like their fellow soldiers in the Hopkinsian phalanx, as they consider their *sight* will bewilder them in morasses, and that all their manœuvres are *predestined*. They are direful opponents, for they imagine their enemies are *monsters by nature*, and *incapable of good deeds*, and themselves, after practising the evolutions above mentioned, are *necessarily* victors. They are *intolerant* disciplinarians : have cashiered *Charity* and *Good works*, two most excellent officers, and promoted *Fanatacism* and *Spiritual Influence* to their stations. The garrison in the battery are well supplied with ordnance and stores ; *Faith* deals out provisions to them, and *Eternal Damnation* is prepared with his slow and ever burning match to apply to the great guns. They have collected a number of recruits, who are to be exercised every week in the peculiar evolutions, marches and countermarches of the garrison ; and *once*, every *five years*, (for the war *is to be perpetual* though they always *talk* of *peace*,) they undergo a regular review, immediately commanded by *Intolerance*. If the recruits should be found deficient in the handling of any weapon or the performing of any evolution, he is either to be dismissed from the garrison, or to undergo the punishment which they have prepared for their enemies. This is no other than a sort of cauldron of burning bitumen, Greek fire and brimstone, of which they have found out the secret manufacture, and on which their prisoners will burn and be tormented without being killed as long as the war lasts. The care of this cauldron is confided to *Satan*, under whose command they imagine their enemies to be secretly enlisted ; but whose person they have overcome and confined in their own service. After *holding forth* to their defective recruits and trying to lead them along by means of *Incomprehensibility*, who has a wonderful influence, as the chaplain of the camp ; and endeavouring to show them the *necessity* of their abstracting themselves from *matter* and renouncing all *concerns* which have not *immediate relation to the garrison ;* should they prove refractory they turn them over to *Satan* and the servants who wait upon him.

For their good soldiers, they have fountains of dirty water constantly flowing, in which they are allowed to bathe, after they are pronounced by the doctor to be clean purged from all influence, which their enemies might be supposed to have over them ; to be freed from all *relationship or affinity* to them, and, as it were, to be *born again* through the instrumentality of *Grace* and *Special Interposition*, who are the parents of the re-organized corps. After they have passed their review, they go into these fountains ; from which, though they in fact come out dirtier than they went in, their eyes being out, they are insensible to the circumstance ; and perhaps their other senses grow imperfect in consequence of their eyes being blinded ; since they imagine

the dirt which adheres to them to be so much sweetness both to the taste and smell.

Thus appointed and equipped are the armies of Intolerance and Superstition; and their array so formidable as almost to daunt the stoutest soldiers in the squadrons of Rational Religion. But they *love* their Queen, and are not governed by the influence of *fear*, like the soldiers of Intolerance; they are naturally brave and fearless, they fight with their *eyes open*. They have unanimously chosen *Charity* and *Good Works*, the excluded officers of the enemy, to important commands; they do not shrink from the encounter.

"Thin though their ranks though scanty be their bands,
Bold are their hearts and nervous are their hands."

Their chaplains, *Investigation* and *Controversy*, promise to give information from time to time of the extent of the enemy's forces, the nature of his preparations and the probabilities of the encounter. When I hear from them again, you shall again hear from

A LOOKER-ON.

ABSURDITIES.

THE poetry of Darwin, Southey, Della Crusca, and their whole train of copyists, has been most successfully ridiculed by Mr. Gifford, Mr. Canning and other criticks, who undertook, about ten years ago, to wield the weapons of satire, against all those notions of affected sensibility in morals and visionary systems in the laws of nature, which the above mentioned writers aimed to inculcate. Since their literary dissolution, Mr. Wordsworth has attracted a crowd of admirers for some metrical peculiarities and childish conceits. Yet he has such an evidence of better understanding amidst all his silliness, as induces the belief of his willingness to establish a ridiculous taste, not because he supposed it accurate, but to gratify some favourite propensity or whim. The writings of Dr. Darwin and Mr. Southey contained such plausible and fascinating diction, that their absurdities could be best exposed by *Parody*; but in order to show the defects of Mr. Wordsworth, it is only necessary to separate them from the beauties with which they are frequently accompanied, and the reader will be astonished, that his admiration for the author had ever been excited. As Mr. Wordsworth's poetry has been the theme of panegyrick in the politer circles in America, and as the taste of the boarding-school miss may easily be perverted by the perusal of the *whole* of the gentleman's compositons, we think we render some service to the publick, when we produce some of his peculiarities as subjects of reprobation. The following extracts are from his 'POEMS.' His *Lyrical Ballads* we may take another occasion to examine.

In a piece denominated "The Beggars," the author exhibits a fair specimen of frivolous conceit, and infantine expression.

She had a tall man's height, or more;
No bonnet screen'd her from the heat;
A long drab-coloured cloak she wore,
A mantle reaching to her feet;
What other dress she had I could not know;
Only she wore a cap that was as white as snow.

Before me begging did she stand,
Pouring out sorrows like a sea;
Grief after grief;—on English land
Such woes I knew could never be;
And yet a boon I gave her; for the creature
Was beautiful to see; a weed of glorious feature!

He is attracted afterwards by two boys, who are as like their mother as peas are like peas, or, according to the poet, as "like that woman's face as gold is like to gold."

They bolted on me thus, and lo!
Each ready with a plaintive whine;
Said I, 'Not half an hour ago
Your mother has had alms of mine.'
'That cannot be,' one answered, 'she is dead.'
'Nay but I gave her pence, and she will buy you bread.'

'She has been dead, Sir, many a day.'
'Sweet boys, you're telling me a lie;
It was your mother as I say—'
And in the twinkling of an eye,
'Come, come!' cried one; and, without more ado,
Off to some other play they both together flew.

Hearing a sort of scream as he is driving into Durham, the poet calls out to the post-boy to stop, and he finds little 'Alice Fell,' who fell a crying, at the back of the carriage. The child getting up behind the vehicle, had entangled her cloak in the wheels. The poet thus informs us of the circumstance.

'My cloak!' the word was last and first,
And loud and bitterly she wept,
As if her very heart would burst;
And down from off the chaise she leapt.
'What ails you, child?' she sobb'd, 'Look here!'
I saw it in the wheel entangled,
A weather beaten rag as e'er
From any garden scarecrow dangled.

Our philanthropist now takes the child into the carriage; that is, after he had extricated the garment. And then he proceeds with the pretty, pretty story.

'My child, in Durham do you dwell?'
She check'd herself in her distress,
And said, 'My name is Alice Fell;
I'm fatherless and motherless.
And I to Durham, sir, belong.'
And then, as if the thought would choke
Her very heart, her grief grew strong;
And all was for her tatter'd cloak.
The chaise drove on; our journey's end
Was nigh; and, sitting by my side,
As if she'd lost her only friend
She wept, nor would be pacified.
Up to the tavern-door we post;
Of Alice and her grief I told;
And I gave money to the host,
To buy a new cloak for the old.
'And let it be of duffil grey,
As warm a cloak as man can sell!'
Proud creature was she the next day,
The little orphan, Alice Fell!

Among some compositions called 'Moods of my own Mind,' we have the following glowing effusions of wonderful sympathy and affection.

My heart leaps up when I when I behold
A rainbow in the sky:
So was it when my life began;
So is it now I am a man;
So be it when I shall grow old,
Or let me die!

Then comes the reason which produces all this, in which the metaphor very beautifully reverses the order of nature.

The *child is father* of the *man*;
And I could wish my days to be
Bound each to each by natural piety.

"A Sparrow's Nest," draws forth the ensuing rapture.

Look, five blue eggs are gleaming there!
Few visions have I seen more fair,
Nor many prospects of *delight*
More *pleasing* than this simple sight.

As the greater includes the less, we presume the author is justified in saying he derives *pleasure* from objects of *delight*; it is besides so novel a remark that he must feel wonderful *pleasure* in the *delight* of having invented it.

Poetry is intended to please, by introducing agreeable and dignified

topicks, which also inspire genius by pleasant associations ; accordingly Mr. Wordsworth gives an account of 'A Blind Highland Boy,' who living near the sea, could not be prevented from adventuring on the dangerous flood. He chose a singular vehicle of conveyance, and Mr. W. has introduced it with all the dignity of which it is susceptible.

In such a vessel ne'er before
Did human creature leave the shore.
But say what was it ?
A *Household Tub*, like one of those
Which women use to wash their clothes.

This sublime description is followed by sending out a real boat to bring back the boy, who sick of his adventure, promises *never to do so no more*, and so ends the tale.

If the reader is not already satiated, we think our concluding quotation, entitled 'Foresight,' will abundantly satisfy him.

That is work which I am rueing—
Do as Charles and I are doing !
Strawberry-blossoms, one and all,
We must spare them—here are many ;
Look at it—the bower is small,
Small and low, though fair as any :
Do not touch it ! summers two
I am older, Anne, than you.
Pull the primrose, sister Anne ;
Pull as many as you can.

Primroses, the spring may love them—
Summer knows but little of them :
Violets, do what they will,
Wither'd on the ground must lie :
Daisies will be daisies still ;
Daisies they must live and die :
Fill your lap and fill your bosom,
Only spare the strawberry-blossom !

FASHIONABLE FOLLY.

At a certain rout which was given a few weeks ago, two young ladies of fashion exhibited their charms so lavishly luxuriant, that it became a question among the beaux of the drawing-room, which of them, whether Miss **** or Miss ******, better understood the position of *Brest harbour* ; which of them, in other words, exhibited the greatest knowledge of the subject. The unanimous determination was, that though Miss **** showed *all*, yet Miss ****** showed *more*.